

Immigration Into Latin America

File

SUGGESTED PROGRAM FOR IMMIGRATION INTO LATIN AMERICA

One of the fundamental problems facing the War Refugee Board is that of providing, either directly or indirectly, an ultimate destination for those refugees who are stateless or who do not wish to return to their homeland. The other twenty republics of this hemisphere offer the greatest habitable areas of the world, yet undeveloped, to which any large emigration from Europe is possible.

The principle obstacle standing in the way of any large-scale movement of refugees from Europe is a difference of language and cultural backgrounds. The present inhabitants of Latin America have a heritage that is essentially Western European whereas the refugees are chiefly Eastern European in origin. Generally speaking, many of the republics have gone on record stating that they are willing to accept large numbers of European immigrants. They wish, however, to restrict immigration to western Mediterranean peoples and to specific economic classes.

There is a definite preference for skilled agricultural and industrial workers or persons with considerable capital capable of developing economic resources. A direct antipathy, in some cases growing into a violent opposition, to peoples coming from eastern Europe and the Levant, is found among Latin Americans. In fact, in most of the southern countries, to be called a "Polaco" (Pole), or a "Moro" (Moor), or a "Turco" (Turk), is considered a vicious insult. One of these three words is usually applied to the peoples of the Levant, particularly the Jews, the Lebanese, and Syrians. There are actually but few Poles, Moors, or true Turks in Latin America. Most Latin Americans are strongly anti-Semitic for the simple reason that many of the Jewish immigrants have, by their industry and business acumen, been eminently successful tradesmen. Their willingness to work much harder and long hours has, in many cases, worked to the detriment of their native Latin competitors. The opposition of members of the medical profession in the United States against the admission to practice of Jewish refugee doctors is also prevalent in Latin America.

With these facts in mind, it is first necessary to undertake a campaign of psychological "softening up" of both the ruling classes and the general public of the other republics. The initial point to be made is that Latin America needs a greater population if the republics there are to achieve the political and economic success they all so desire. While the United States still had great undeveloped economic resources, it kept its doors open to the peoples of Europe, regardless of origin, because it needed a large population. We recognize that

was not so much the immigrants themselves who contributed to the development of the United States but their children and their children's children. We are aware that in the mass the immigrants themselves were not always of the highest class and were frequently found wanting in adjusting themselves to our standards. Their children, however, by being born and raised in an environment completely different from that of their fathers', have become Americans and as such, through education, now adhere to our standards. So it can be in Latin America if the leaders of those republics will take the long view and open the doors of their countries to unrestricted immigration.

The second point in the program is the assistance which the United States is ready to give to those nations to the south. We, in this country, no longer have a frontier economy and, therefore, unrestricted immigration is no longer possible. It is to the mutual benefit of the United States and the other American countries that the latter should develop their natural resources and evolve a more advanced economy. The Government of the United States has committed itself to the policy of lending financial and technical assistance to the other republics to develop local industry, agriculture, and mineral resources. To help those countries acquire the desired population increases which are so vital for this economic development, the United States Government is prepared to establish, in cooperation with the governments of Latin America, a program for the transportation and settlement of European refugees during the war period and for general immigration in the post-war era.

For the present, the refugees are primarily of Jewish origin because the Nazis' "Hymn of Hate" calls for the extermination of Jews from Europe. Children and elderly people constitute the bulk of the refugees who are able to escape or be brought out of Hitler's Europe. After military operations have ceased, however, many farmers and workers will wish to leave the war-torn desolation of Europe behind them and start life anew in the freedom of Latin America. Hence, to achieve the desired goal, the other American republics will, as did the United States, have to take the bad with the good, the undesirables with the desirables and fuse all into one strong national people.

Of the countries in Latin America, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Brazil, and Uruguay are today perhaps the most receptive to the immigration of refugees. It is suggested, therefore, we initiate our plan with these four countries where we have the best chance of success. If we can get the doors open in those four, the other countries are likely to fall in line. The Dominican Republic has gone on record as far back as the Evian Conference of 1938 as having adopted a policy of the "Open Door" and President Trujillo has stated his willingness to accept at least 100,000 refugees. President Medina of

Venezuela, on his recent visit to this country, discussed with President Roosevelt and Nelson Rockefeller the question of immigration into his country and stated that he believed Venezuela can absorb 250,000 immigrants in a relatively short time. The United States' policy toward Brazil and Uruguay should make those two countries very receptive to suggestions and assistance from us in this matter.

It is recommended that the first step be the opening of the psychological campaign in those four countries through the medium of the propaganda machinery of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. Nelson Rockefeller has already indicated to me his interest in the question of immigration to Latin America and his willingness to place the services of his organization to the disposal of the War Refugee Board. The CIAA can reach masses as well as the individuals in Latin America through its media of press, radio, and motion pictures. The Coordination Committee in each of the republics can be given instructions to develop this plan locally. The cooperation of the Department of State's foreign service establishment in Latin America should be readily obtainable in furthering the program.

The key to the success of the program will be the cooperation received from the Jewish leaders in the United States, in Europe, and in Latin America in impressing upon adult Jewish refugees the vital idea that they, the refugees, must upon arrival in Latin America, make every effort to assimilate themselves as soon as possible into the local population. They must eliminate their natural inclination to gather together in colonies in the large cities, but instead should disperse themselves throughout the country into which they are immigrating. The refugees must be prepared to accept the initial antagonism toward themselves and should make every effort to counteract that opposition. Wherever the individual refugee shows an aptitude he should be given industrial and agricultural training so that on arrival in Latin America it will not be necessary for him to engage in small business.

With this in mind, it should be possible for either the War Refugee Board or UNRRA to organize training programs in such camps as Fedralla and others in North Africa, which may later be established. It would not be difficult to find qualified manual arts and agriculture teachers for assignment to those camps. The settlement colonies in Sosua in the Dominican Republic and the refugee agricultural colonies in Bolivia and Paraguay were doomed to failure from the beginning because the colonists were expected to learn their trades once they had arrived in Latin America. They had, therefore, to undergo the doubly difficult task of acquiring a means of self-support and adjusting themselves to new and strange living conditions. The fact that we would be offering at least partially-trained immigrants would, I feel, go far toward dissipating much of

the antagonism toward refugees now existant in Latin America. Another important phase in the training of the immigrants should be the teaching of Spanish and Portuguese. Even a very rudimentary knowledge of the language of the country of ultimate settlement would be another bar removed from the barrier.

A variation on the training program should be made in the case of children. At the present time, the Board has the project of eventually having brought to the United States 5,000 children, 4,000 from Switzerland and 1,000 from Spain. Efforts could be made to have the governments of the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Brazil, and Uruguay assure the Swiss Government that they would take children from Switzerland under the same conditions that we have agreed to accept them. In asking those governments to accept the children, the Board could offer to prepare the children during their stay in Switzerland for their future life in Latin America by giving them instruction in the language, history, and culture of their adopted country. In other words, we might endeavor to give the children a counterpart of the education that they will receive once they arrive in their new homeland. The same educational program could be organized in the camps in North Africa. An offer to undertake such education in cooperation with the governments of those countries should make refusal to accept the children difficult.

Once the immigrants are prepared for emigration to Latin America, definite plans for their reception should be set up. Funds should be available, possibly on a loan basis, to the immigrants to permit them to become independent of local aid once they have arrived in Latin America. On arrival they could be held in a reception center and undergo a short period of orientation. It is particularly important that the first groups of immigrants should be carefully supervised to insure that they are making the desired progress toward assimilation into the population of their adopted country.

I believe that the Board has a grave responsibility in connection with any program for war-time immigration to Latin America. If we can successfully initiate such a program for orderly immigration at this time, we will lay the ground-work for a large migration in the post-war period and thereby make a major contribution to the solution of the general refugee problem which, after all, has only been complicated by the present war.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
WAR REFUGEE BOARD

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

DATE

TO Mr. Friedman

March 8, 1944

FROM Miss Laughlin *af*

We have had communications from the following South American countries etc., summarizing these reports:

San Salvador might support for a reasonable time 150 refugees. Their support would be provided by the Israelite Community of El Salvador. Governmental authorities, however, will permit only a limited class to enter.

Panama is not willing to take refugees. Fears their becoming merchants. Furthermore, from our standpoint, Panama would seem an unwise selection.

Honduras requests the clarification of the following:

"(1) Exactly what sort of cooperation is desired from Honduras?"

"(2) If such cooperation envisages the actual admission of additional Jews into the country, does the United States expect to do likewise? (It would be embarrassing to ask Honduras to do something not being done by the United States.)"

"(3) Would the desired cooperation involve the expenditure of funds?"

Cuba. No doubt steps have been taken to prevent, if possible, the freezing of the deposits of immigrants.

Dominican Republic offered at one time to take 100,000. There are approximately 1,000 there now and 500 of whom are in a Jewish colony at Sosua established by IGC. One-hundred-thousand would seem a little exaggerated, but there is little question but that the Dominican Republic could absorb several thousand refugees, if we could provide for their care.

Haiti. The President has suggested that he will raise a fund of \$10,000 by State lottery to assist in the war refugee work. Presumably, he will make this available to the United States War Fund. Should he be further encouraged? We are discouraged from sending any refugees there.

Brazil. The Brazilian Congress of Economy has adopted a resolution very general and with many precautions opposing the immigration into Brazil of stateless persons. On the whole the Brazil report sounded very discouraging.

Paraguay presented a very full and interesting report on the refugee situation particularly from the Jewish standpoint. Also, have offered an interesting outline for the guidance of the Board.

Uruguay expresses a willingness to cooperate, but asks for further information from us in regard to our policy and program, and I believe they should have an answer.

Venezuela has twice asked us to explain what we wish them to do.

Australia is rather cold to the proposition. It appears to be beautifully wrapped in red tape which would be difficult to cut through. I believe Australia should have an answer to their communication of February 24:

- "(1) the connection between the Evian Committee and the regional sub-committee on displaced persons of the UMER, and the War Refugee Board; and
- "(2) the actual type of work which it is contemplated will be undertaken by the War Refugee Board."

Perhaps the Board has already taken steps, but if not, I would suggest it be done immediately in arranging for the transportation of 300 Jewish children from Switzerland to Australia, these children to be cared for by the Australian Jewish Welfare Association. This offer was made by Australia many months ago, but to date they have not received the refugee children. We should also take steps to locate the Polish refugees who have supposedly reached Iran on their way to Australia, and there the trail is lost.

Mexico. The question of Spanish refugees from Mexico has been handled by another member of the staff. The above is a very brief summary, but until the United States accepts refugees, I feel there is little we can ask or do for the other American countries.